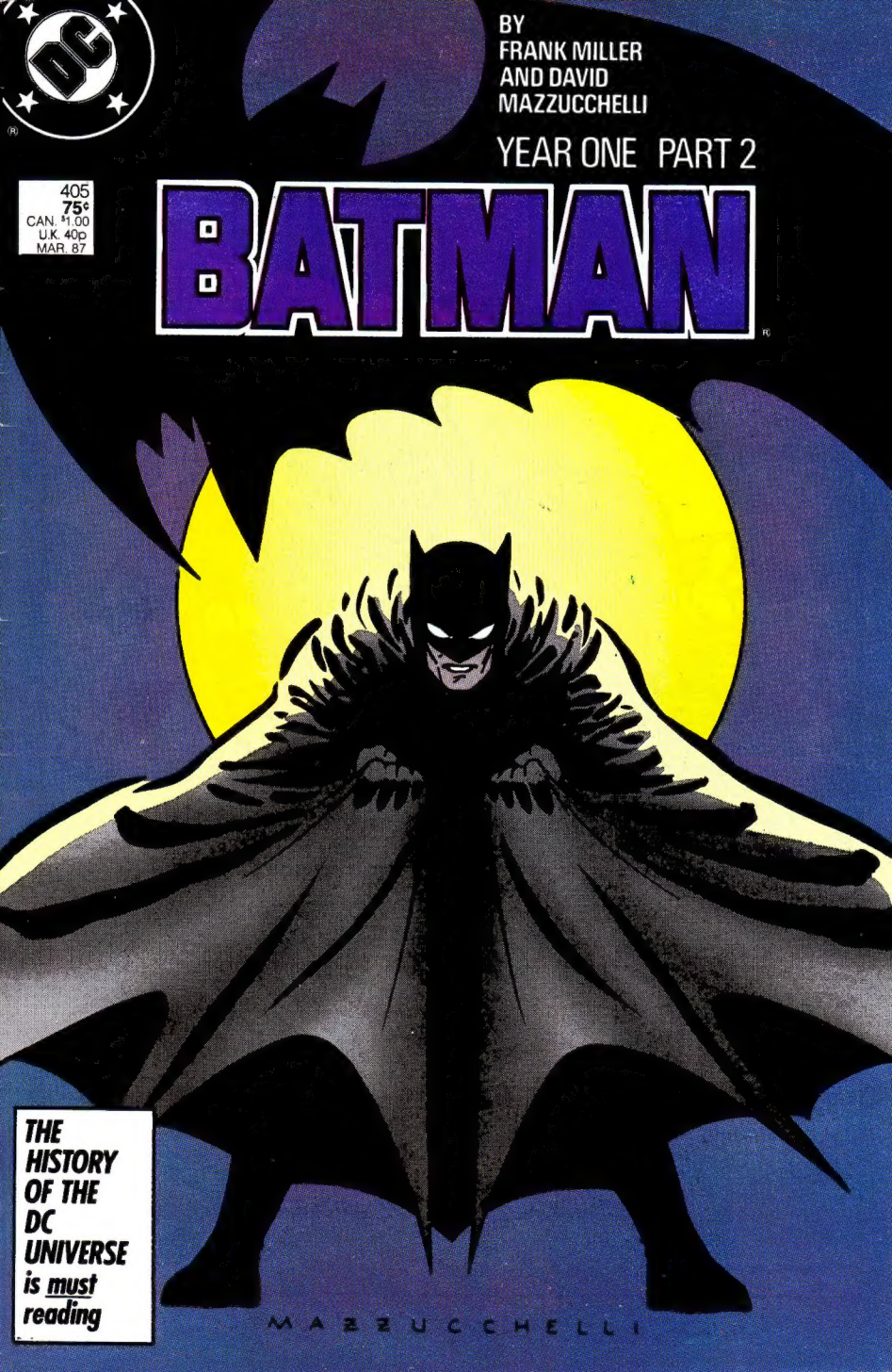
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and Jerry Robinson

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Todd Klein: Letterer
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Batman created by Bob Kane

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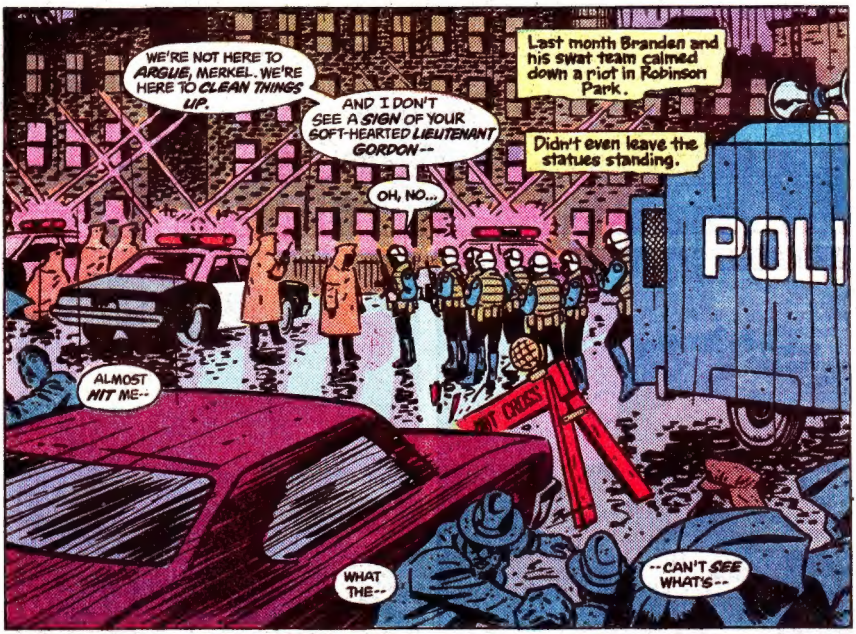
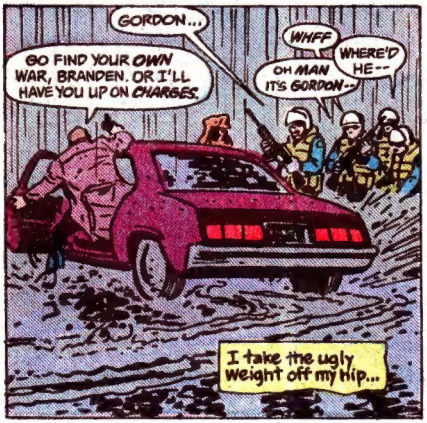
April 4
The day starts early with a call from Merkel about a hostage situation in Brigham Circle.
Barbara wakes up with me--she always does, no matter how quiet I try to be--and somehow has my coffee ready by the time I pull on my pants.
COME IN, MERKEL...
WORLD'S GREA
The rain has worked its magic on the wiring of my heap. Between Rice Krispy sounds I get every fourth word.
I'm two blocks from the action, my stomach lurching with the engine through backed-up traffic.
Damn rubberneckers...
NO CAN'T DON'T WANT ISN'T BLANK
Best I can tell, nobody's sure what the kidnapper wants. He isn't making much sense.
He's holding three children at gunpoint. Sounds like Merkel's got some background on him...
...I SAID NO, SIR. HE HASN'T FIRED A SHOT...
...NO, SIR, NOT A CRIMINAL RECORD. GOT THE WORD FROM ARKHAM ASYLUM...YES, SIR. ARKHAM...
...NAME'S ALBERT BLUME, DIAGNOSED PARANOID SCHIZOPHRENIC. RELEASED TWO WEEKS AGO...
=SKRKK= NO, SIR--NO SKRKK OF VIOLENT =SKRKK=
SIR--TROUBLE--IT'S SKRKK=
=SKRKK= BRANDEN =SKRKK=
WORLD'S GREATEST DAD
Branden.
JESUS, YOU--
Coffee splashes in my lap, taking the last of the cotton from my mind.
Branden. Him and his lunatic gestapo.
It'll be a massacre.
2

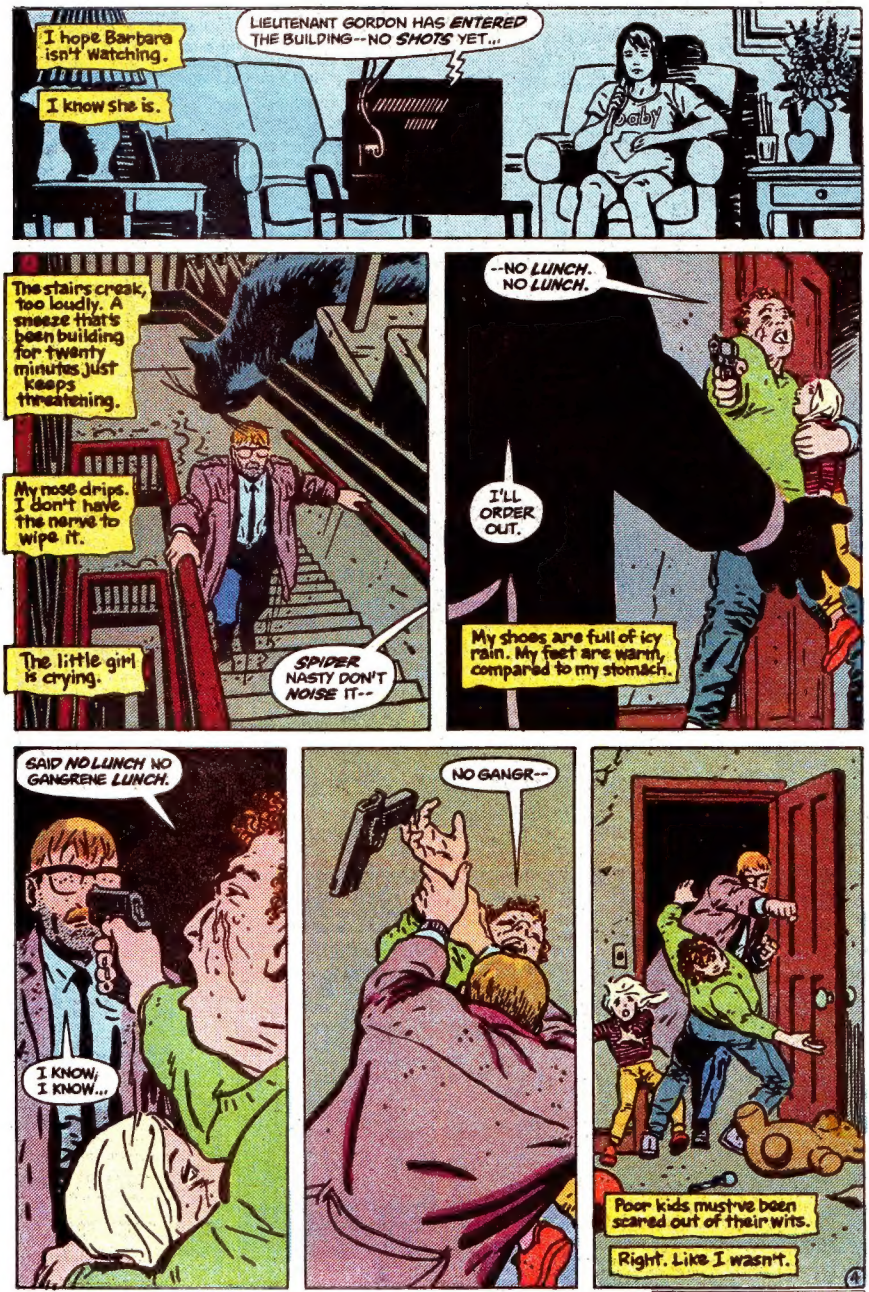

WE'RE NOT HERE TO ARGUE, MERKEL. WE'RE HERE TO CLEAN THINGS UP.
AND I DON'T SEE A SIGN OF YOUR SOFT-HEARTED LIEUTENANT GORDON--
Last month Branden and his swat team calmed down a riot in Robinson Park.
Didn't even leave the statues standing.
OH, NO...
POLI
ALMOST HIT ME--
--CAN'T SEE WHAT'S--
WHAT THE--

DEFRIBBILATE.
DOESN'T SMELL OFTEN. TOO MANY GUNS.
Those kids don't have a chance--he'll push that poor bastard over the edge--


GORDON...
GO FIND YOUR OWN WAR, BRANDEN. OR I'LL HAVE YOU UP ON CHARGES.
WHFF
OH MAN IT'S GORDON--
WHERE'D HE--
I take the ugly weight off my hip...

...I hold it up like a dead rat and pray that the man understands...
Behind me Branden curses.

I head for the front door.
I'm sure nobody can see my knees wobble.


I hope Barbara isn't watching.
I know she is.
LIEUTENANT GORDON HAS ENTERED THE BUILDING--NO SHOTS YET...
baby
The stairs creak, too loudly. A sneeze that's been building for twenty minutes just keeps threatening.
My nose drips. I don't have the nerve to wipe it.
The little girl is crying.
SPIDER NASTY DON'T NOISE IT--
--NO LUNCH. NO LUNCH.
I'LL ORDER OUT.
My shoes are full of icy rain. My feet are warm, compared to my stomach.
SAID NO LUNCH NO GANGRENE LUNCH.
I KNOW, I KNOW...
NO GANGR--
Poor kids must've been scared out of their wits.
Right. Like I wasn't.

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April 5
HUMILIATED ME. IN FRONT OF MY MEN. HUMILIATED ME.
GILLIAN B. L
COMMISSIONER OF POLICE
NOTHING BUT TROUBLE, THAT ONE.
YOU DO KNOW I SYMPATHIZE, DON'T YOU, BRANDEN?
YES YOU DO. AND YOU KNOW I'D LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN TO REMOVE HIM FROM SERVICE. MY GOOD FRIEND DETECTIVE FLASS HAS MADE SEVERAL SUGGESTIONS ALONG THESE LINES.
HERO COP
STOP
BUT WE MUST BE PATIENT. GORDON HAS THE PRESS ON HIS SIDE...
It kicks.
Gunpowder burns my eyes and fills my nostrils.
A wad of lead flies...
If that were a man--
--the wad would shatter his spine and he'd feel his legs go dead even as his heart explodes...
Another kick.
The wad would leave a neat, round hole and I'd see the horror in his eyes as it pushed half his brain through the back of his skull.
I hate the gun.
I hate my job.
I keep practicing.
April 6
Another kick.
Strong boy, little James...
5

...I pray he's very strong. And smart enough to stay alive.
How did I let this happen?
How did I screw up so badly...to bring an innocent child to life...
...in a city without hope...

April 9
They call it my night off.
It starts out well enough, with the smell of Barbara's lemon chicken--
--and her fingers, kneading baby oil into my shoulders...
...Rachmaninoff, played soft...her idea...corny, but it works...
DON'T HAVE TO GO TO METROPOLIS...
...FOR A MAN OF STEEL...
...COULD USE A JACKHAMMER ON YOUR BACK...
FEELS GREAT, HONEY...

RINGG
...SAID YOU'D UNPLUG IT, JIM...
HONEY, I FORGOT... I'M SORRY...

YES, SERGEANT.
MAYBE YOU SHOULD CALL THE ZOO.
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, I'LL GET HIM.

IT'S MERKEL.
SOMETHING ABOUT A GIANT BAT.
CHICKEN WILL KEEP.

The costume works--better than I'd hoped.
They freeze and stare, and give me all the time in the world...
...I come in close on the one who looks the strongest--throw him a growl. I've brought all the way from Africa--
--and suddenly everything falls to pieces.
The one to my left calls for his mother--
--to my right the other collects his senses and leaps to position--he'll be trouble--
--the strong one gets scared--too scared--
--No--
--I am no killer--
--he screams like a girl--
--can't be older than fifteen--
--a child--just a child--
--the one I was worried about takes his shot--
--he's trained--kick's got power--
7

--he doesn't realise-- or he doesn't care--
--that if I let go--
--we're twenty stories up--
--again--
--this is getting bad--
--steady-- hold on--
--some of that one's nibbling go--
--forget him--
The television-- still hasn't hit the street--
--doesn't matter-- hold on--
--here he comes--
--brace-- with leg--
--now-- grab it--

[CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING]

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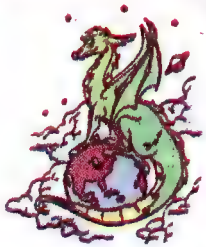

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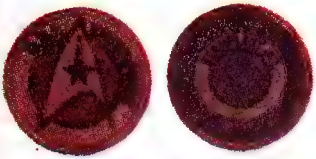

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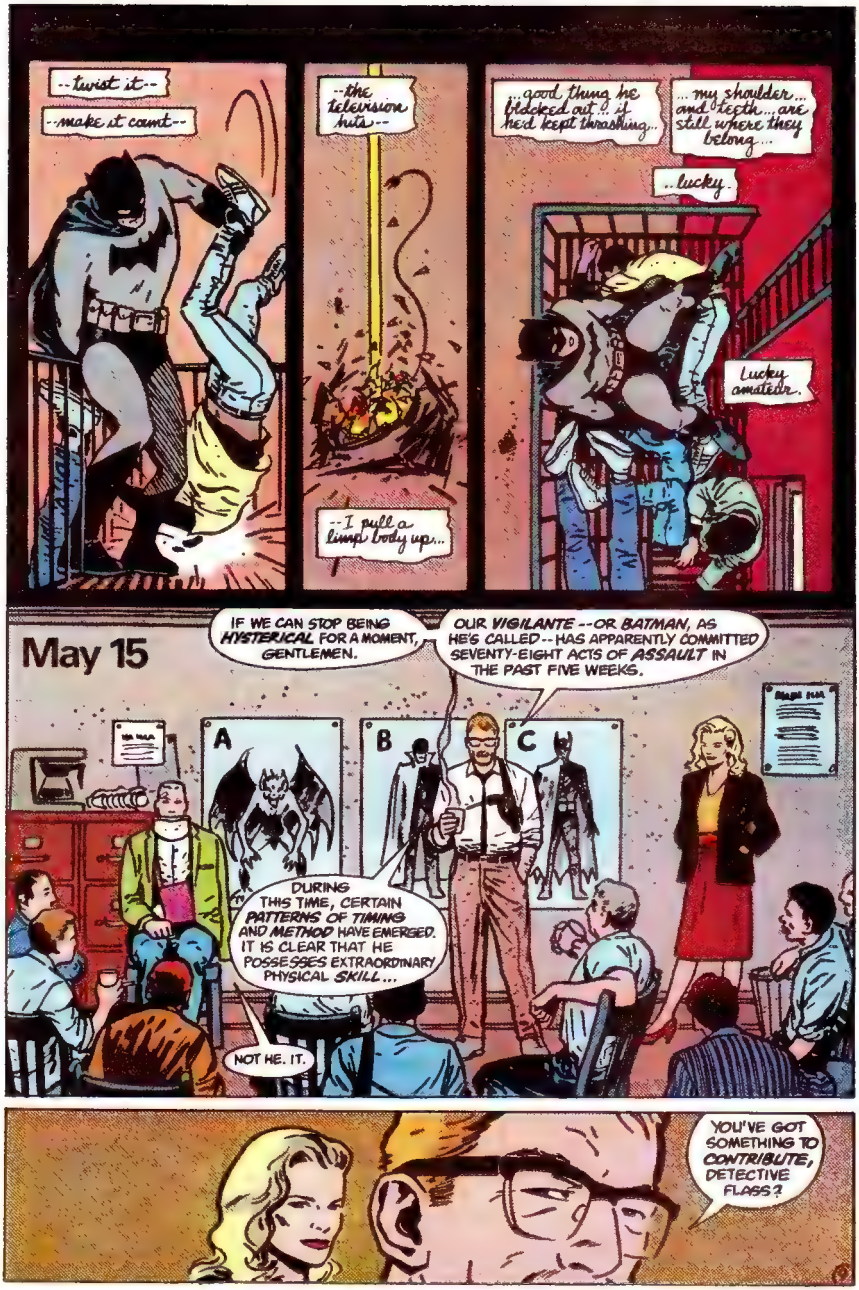
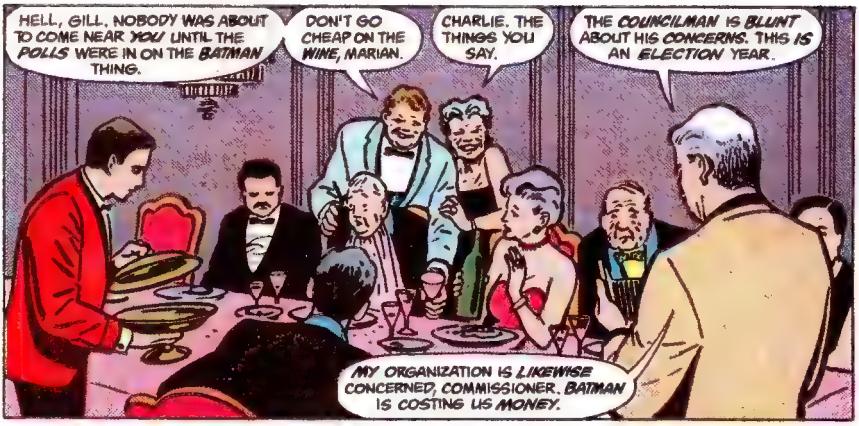
CAPTAIN ATOM


--twist it--
--make it count--
--the television hits--
--I pull a limp body up...
...good thing he blacked out? if he'd kept thrashing...
...my shoulder... and teeth... are still where they belong...
..lucky.
Lucky amateur.
May 15
IF WE CAN STOP BEING HYSTERICAL FOR A MOMENT, GENTLEMEN.
OUR VIGILANTE --OR BATMAN, AS HE'S CALLED-- HAS APPARENTLY COMMITTED SEVENTY-EIGHT ACTS OF ASSAULT IN THE PAST FIVE WEEKS.
A
B
C
DURING THIS TIME, CERTAIN PATTERNS OF TIMING AND METHOD HAVE EMERGED. IT IS CLEAR THAT HE POSSESSES EXTRAORDINARY PHYSICAL SKILL...
NOT HE. IT.
YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING TO CONTRIBUTE, DETECTIVE FLASS?

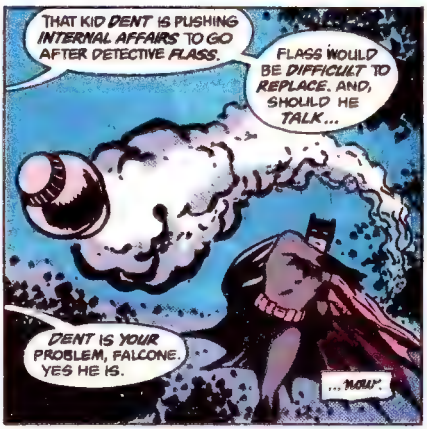
HE'S NOT HUMAN. I'M JUST TELLING YOU HE'S NOT HUMAN.
THANK YOU, DETECTIVE FLASS.
WHILE THE VIGILANTE HAS BEEN CAREFUL TO REMAIN UNPREDICTABLE, CHOOSING THE NEIGHBORHOODS FOR HIS ASSAULTS AT RANDOM--
--HE CONSISTENTLY OPERATES BETWEEN THE HOURS OF MIDNIGHT AND FOUR A.M....
...ANYBODY GOT A MATCH?
THANK YOU, DETECTIVE ESSEN.
HE'S WORKING HIS WAY FROM STREET LEVEL CRIME TO ITS UPPER ECHELONS, FROM JUNKIE MUGGER TO PUSHER TO SUPPLIER--
--AND, ALONG THE WAY, TO ANY COPS THAT MIGHT BE HELPING THE WHOLE PROCESS ALONG...
...NOW, FLASS. TELL US WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT BATMAN.
TRY NOT TO EXAGGERATE.
IT'S LIKE MY REPORT, LIEUTENANT. I RECEIVED AN ANONYMOUS TIP LEADING ME TO AN EAST END COCAINE DELIVERY...
"...I was in the process of single-handedly apprehending the felons," says Flass, and coughs.
He looks around the room to see if anybody's going to challenge him, and goes on...
..."then I heard giant wings flap. It flew down from the sky--"
Somebody chuckles. Flass turns another shade redder.
"...one of the felons I had not yet disarmed produced a 357 magnum--"
"-- its wings were about thirty feet across. It bellowed like... well, I've never heard anything like it..."
10

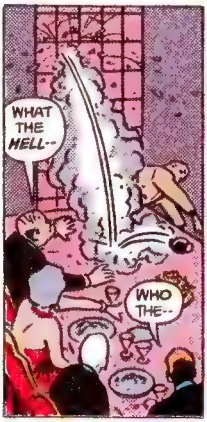
"--he fired--point blank range, at the creature--"
"--and the bullet passed straight through the creature like it wasn't there--"
The snorts and giggles stop Flags cold for a second. He shoots me a look I'd like to frame and put on my wall.
"--and it started laughing..."
"...Other members of the gang drew forth their guns--something flew from the creatures hand."
"I remember noticing it had claws..."
CLAWS. RIGHT.
...IT WAS LITTLE DART THINGS...THEY PARALYZED THE FELONS...
...BUT ME HE SINGLED OUT...
...LITTLE DART THINGS...
GENTLEMEN, GENTLEMEN...
GO ON, FLAGS. PLEASE.
May 19
The costume--and the weapons--have been tested. It's time to get serious.
Chauffeur by chauffeur, I make my way toward the Mayor's mansion...
Only three of them are awake.
PFFT
Only half of them are armed.
There's a guard with a machine pistol in the yard...
17

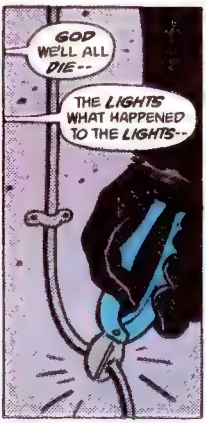
LIEUTENANT GORDON. WHAT A PLEASANT SURPRISE.
BATMAN? I AM EATING, LIEUTENANT.
...NO, I HAVE NOT FILLED YOUR REQUESTS FOR PERSONNEL. I FIND THEM EXCESSIVE.
...YES, LIEUTENANT, I AM WELL AWARE OF HOW MANY LAWS THE VIGILANTE IS BREAKING. BUT THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO EVERYTHING, AREN'T THERE?
Lieutenant Gordon. I've been hearing his name often.
All the right people seem to hate him.
Floods all set...
YES THERE ARE. AND THE BATMAN IS HAVING A POSITIVE EFFECT ON PUBLIC SPIRIT. OR HAVE YOU NOTICED THE DROP IN STREET CRIME, THESE PAST WEEKS?...
...FURTHER, I AM NOT IN THE HABIT OF EXPLAINING MYSELF TO MY LIEUTENANTS.
I HOPE WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER, GORDON.
HAVE YOU SEEN BATMAN, COMMISSIONER? THEY SAY HE'S HUGE...
YOU SHOULDN'T PRY, MARIAN. GILL HAS HIS HANDS FULL, THESE DAYS.
WE'RE TRUSTING HIM TO COPE WITH BATMAN--AND WITH GORDON.
AND I APPRECIATE YOUR TRUST, BOYS. YES I DO.
GOOD TO SEE YOU ALL. IT'S BEEN A WHILE...
Not yet...


HELL, GILL. NOBODY WAS ABOUT TO COME NEAR YOU UNTIL THE POLLS WERE IN ON THE BATMAN THING.
DON'T GO CHEAP ON THE WINE, MARIAN.
CHARLIE. THE THINGS YOU SAY.
THE COUNCILMAN IS BLUNT ABOUT HIS CONCERNS. THIS IS AN ELECTION YEAR.
MY ORGANIZATION IS LIKEWISE CONCERNED, COMMISSIONER. BATMAN IS COSTING US MONEY.

TWO SIDES TO EVERYTHING, FRIENDS. LOOK AT THE LONG TERM. A FEW STREET OPERATORS ARE PUT OUT OF ACTION, YES--
--BUT THE PEOPLE OF GOTHAM CITY HAVE A HERO. MAKES THEM FEEL SAFE. AND THE SAFER THEY FEEL, THE FEWER QUESTIONS THEY ASK.
I DON'T LIKE IT. IT'S STIRRING THINGS UP.


THAT KID DENT IS PUSHING INTERNAL AFFAIRS TO GO AFTER DETECTIVE FLASS.
FLASS WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO REPLACE. AND, SHOULD HE TALK...
DENT IS YOUR PROBLEM, FALCONE. YES HE IS.
...NOW.

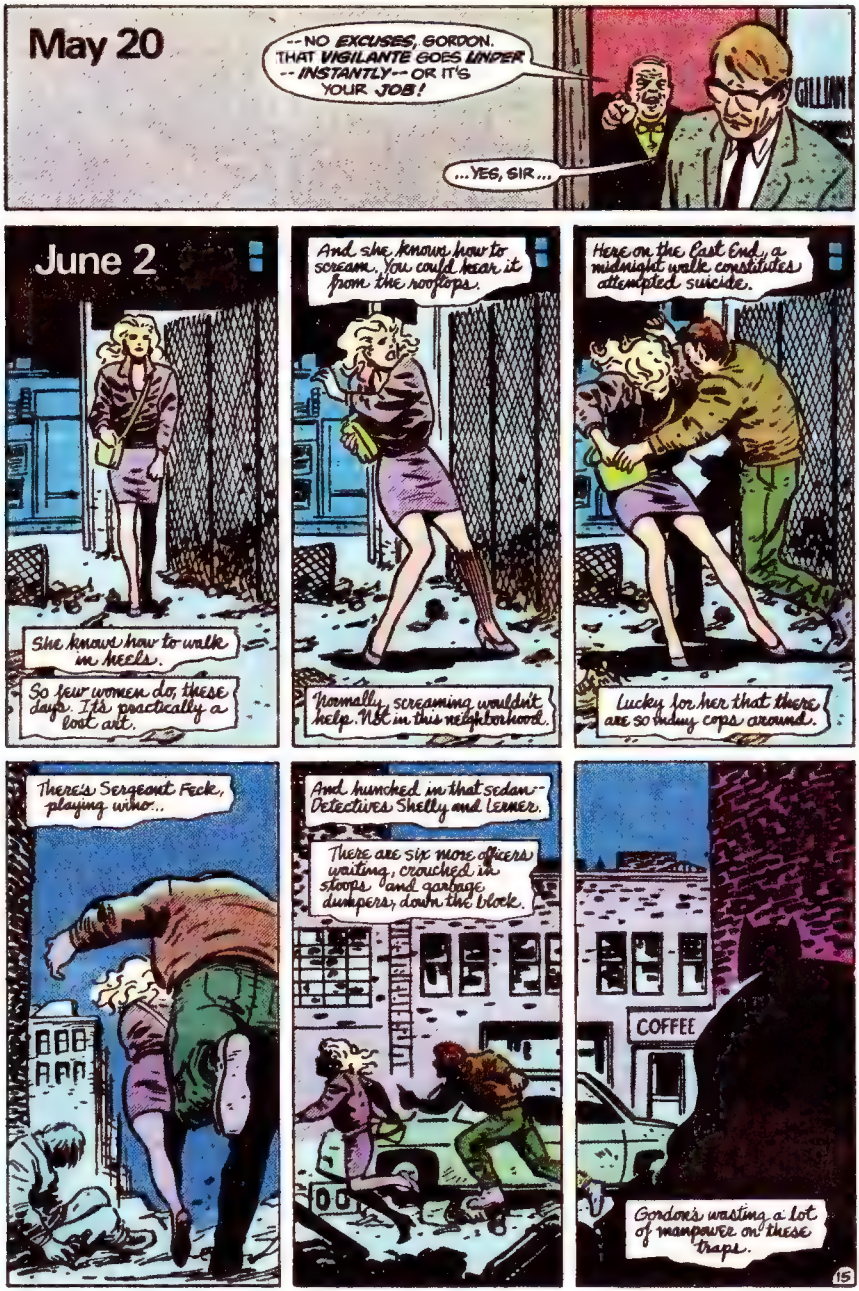

WHAT THE HELL--
WHO THE--

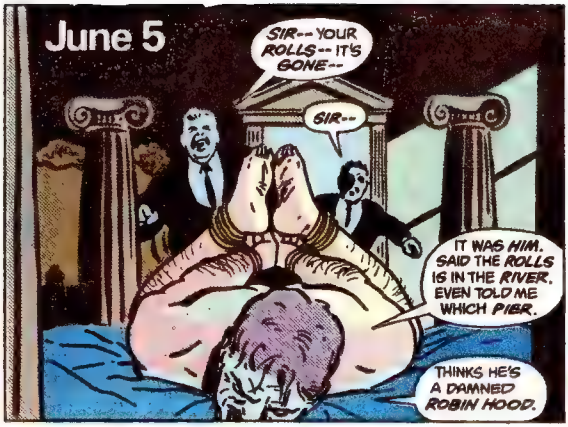

GOD WE'LL ALL DIE--
THE LIGHTS WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LIGHTS--

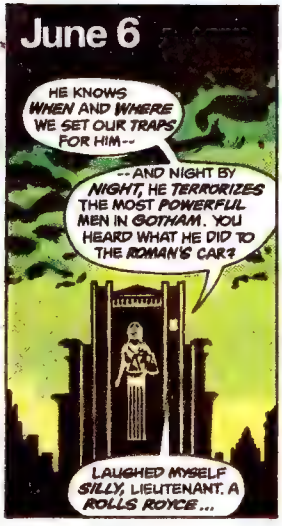
Now--take out the wall--
--hit the flood--
--it's showtime--
SETTLE DOWN DAMN IT IT'S JUST SMOKE--
SOME STUPID PRANK--
POISON IT'S--
SHUT UP--

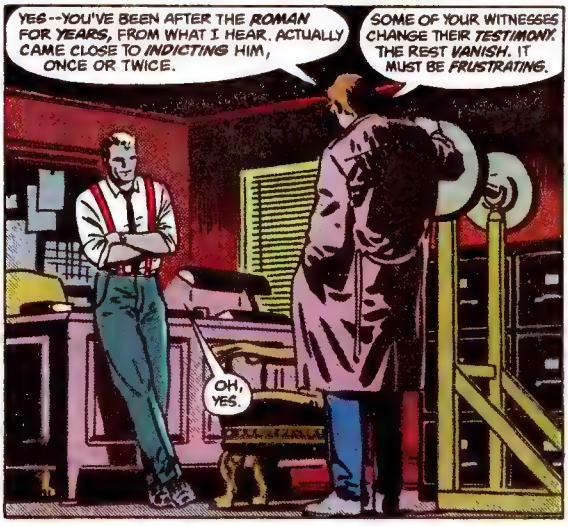
POOM

LADIES, GENTLEMEN.
YOU HAVE EATEN WELL.
YOU'VE EATEN GOTHAM'S WEALTH. ITS SPIRIT.
YOUR FEAST IS NEARLY OVER.
FROM THIS MOMENT ON--
--NONE OF YOU ARE SAFE.


May 20
--NO EXCUSES, GORDON. THAT VIGILANTE GOES UNDER -- INSTANTLY -- OR IT'S YOUR JOB!
...YES, SIR...
GILLIAN
June 2
She knows how to walk in heels.
So few women do, these days. It's practically a lost art.
And she knows how to scream. You could hear it from the rooftops.
Normally, screaming wouldn't help. Not in this neighborhood.
Here on the East End, a midnight walk constitutes attempted suicide.
Lucky for her that there are so many cops around.
There's Sergeant Feck, playing who...
And hunched in that sedan -- Detectives Shelly and Lerner.
There are six more officers waiting, crouched in stoops and garbage dumpers, down the block.
COFFEE
Gordon's wasting a lot of manpower on these traps.


June 5
SIR-- YOUR ROLLS-- IT'S GONE--
SIR--
IT WAS HIM. SAID THE ROLLS IS IN THE RIVER. EVEN TOLD ME WHICH PIER.
THINKS HE'S A DAMNED ROBIN HOOD.


June 6
HE KNOWS WHEN AND WHERE WE SET OUR TRAPS FOR HIM--
--AND NIGHT BY NIGHT, HE TERRORIZES THE MOST POWERFUL MEN IN GOTHAM. YOU HEARD WHAT HE DID TO THE ROMAN'S CAR?
LAUGHED MYSELF SILLY, LIEUTENANT. A ROLLS ROYCE...


YES--YOU'VE BEEN AFTER THE ROMAN FOR YEARS, FROM WHAT I HEAR. ACTUALLY CAME CLOSE TO INDICTING HIM, ONCE OR TWICE.
SOME OF YOUR WITNESSES CHANGE THEIR TESTIMONY. THE REST VANISH. IT MUST BE FRUSTRATING.
OH, YES.

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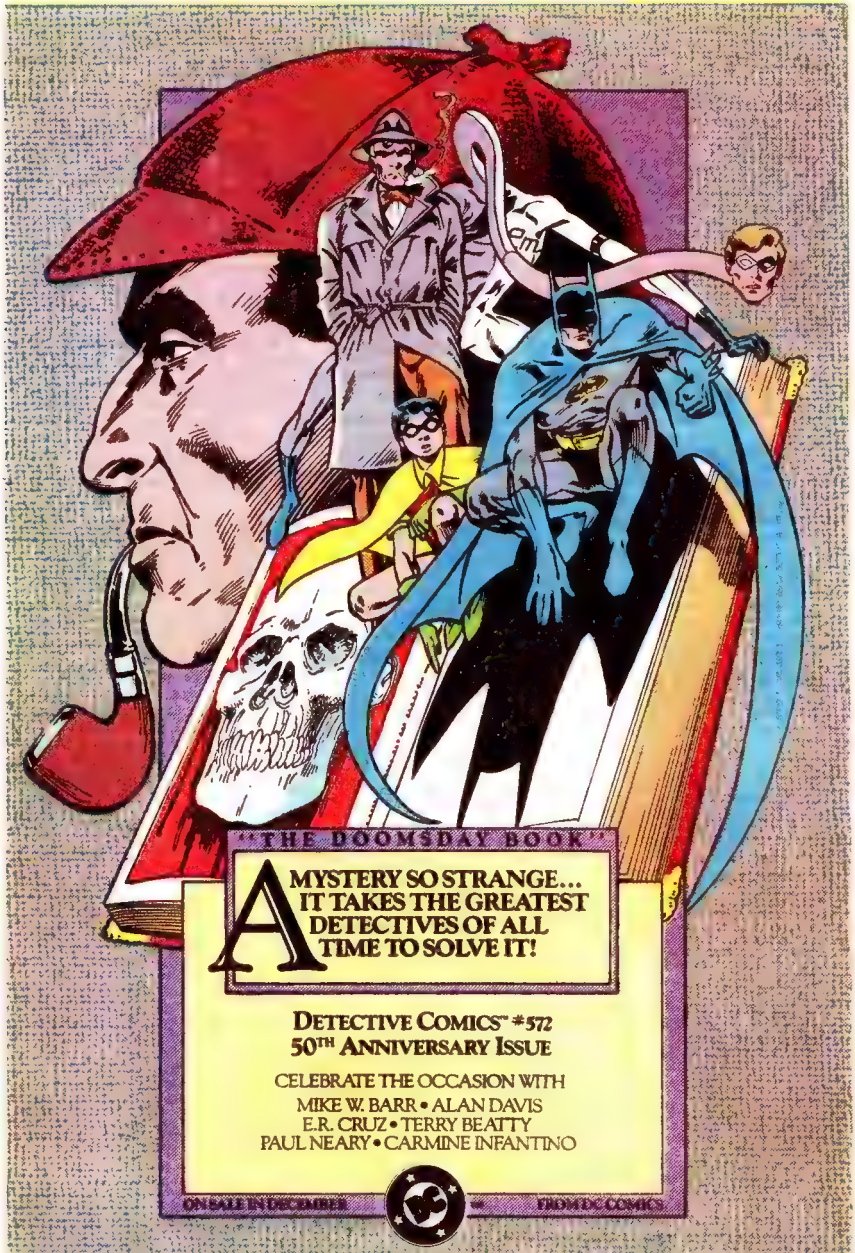
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FROM DC COMICS

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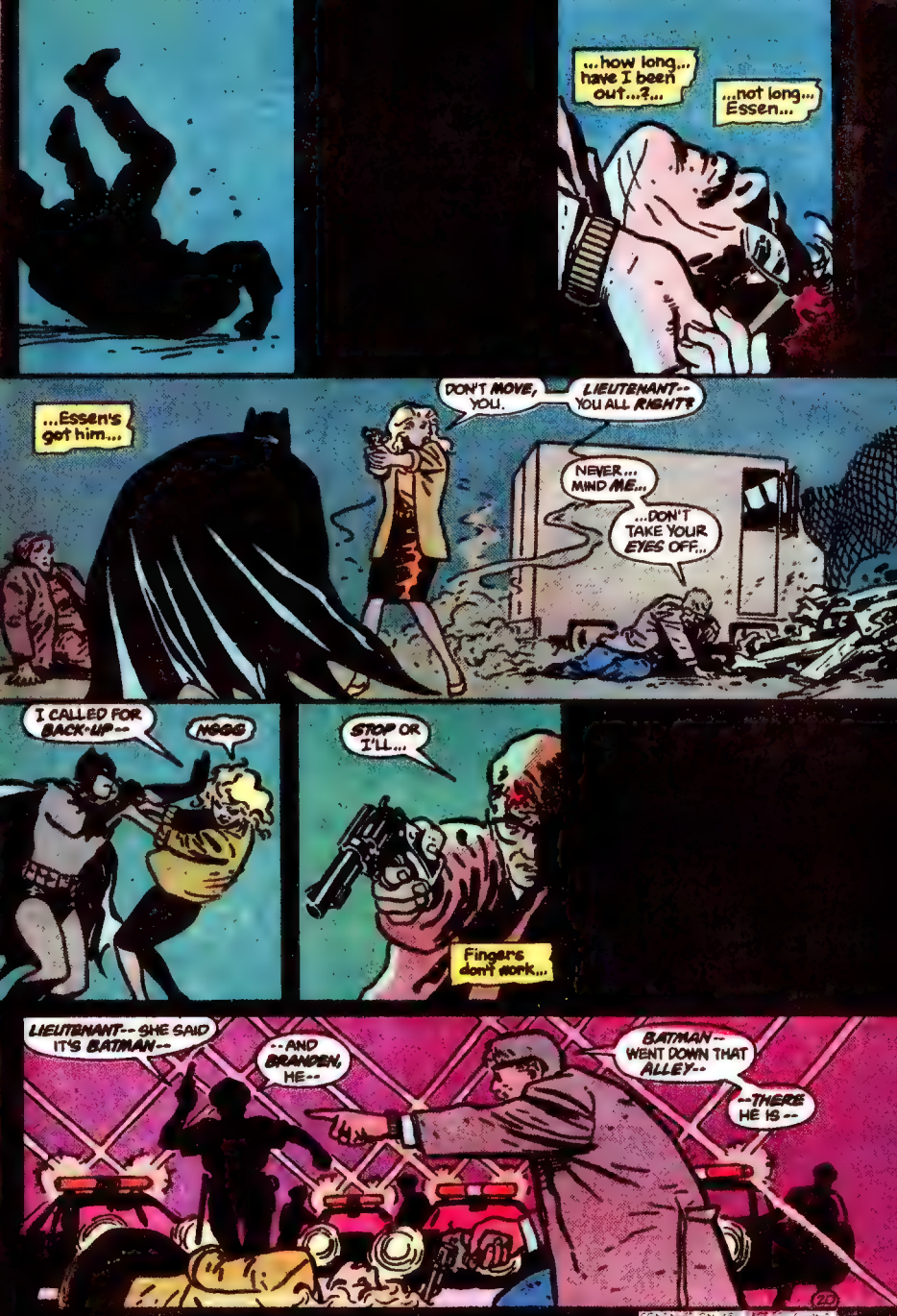
Sherlock Holmes is a character created by Arthur Conan Doyle

...THOUGHT HE'D NEVER LEAVE.
YOU CAN COME OUT NOW.
ALIBIS? DENT HAD ONE ALIBI, ESSEN. FOR EVERY DATE.
SAYS HE WAS HOME BETWEEN MIDNIGHT AND FOUR. WITH HIS WIFE. NO POINT IN QUESTIONING HER.
YOU REALLY THINK HE'S BATMAN, LIEUTENANT?
IT'S POSSIBLE. DENT CERTAINLY IS PASSIONATE ENOUGH.
BUT IT'D TAKE MORE THAN MUSCLES TO FIGHT THE WAY BATMAN DOES--OR TO GET AROUND THE WAY HE DOES. AND THOSE WEAPONS...
...I MEAN, HE'S GOT AN ARSENAL. HARD TO AFFORD ON DENT'S SALARY.
MONEY-- LIEUTENANT... BRUCE WAYNE IS THE RICHEST MAN IN GOTHAM--AND--
--BEING FROM OUT OF TOWN, YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW THIS, BUT HIS PARENTS WERE MURDERED. BY A MUGGER, I THINK.
HE WAS JUST A LITTLE BOY AT THE TIME...
I COULD KISS YOU, ESSEN.
I'm already tasting her lipstick on the cigarette...
...her fingernails bite into my knee--
--that truck-- what the hell--
SKREEEEFEE

Maybe it's pills--
--maybe it's a heart attack--
--maybe it's both but that doesn't matter--
--he's out of control-- his foot must be pressed to the accelerator--
--oh, no-- that old woman--
--can't let this happen--
SKREEEEE
--come on you heap move--
LIEUTENANT--
TAKE THE WHEEL.

--damn--no time--
--no time--
--can't reach--
--no time--
--it's over I've blown it--


...how long... have I been out...?...
...not long... Essen...
...Essen's got him...
DON'T MOVE, YOU.
LIEUTENANT-- YOU ALL RIGHT?
NEVER... MIND ME...
...DON'T TAKE YOUR EYES OFF...
I CALLED FOR BACK-UP--
HGGG
STOP OR I'LL...
Fingers don't work...
LIEUTENANT-- SHE SAID IT'S BATMAN--
--AND BRANDEN, HE--
BATMAN-- WENT DOWN THAT ALLEY--
--THERE HE IS --

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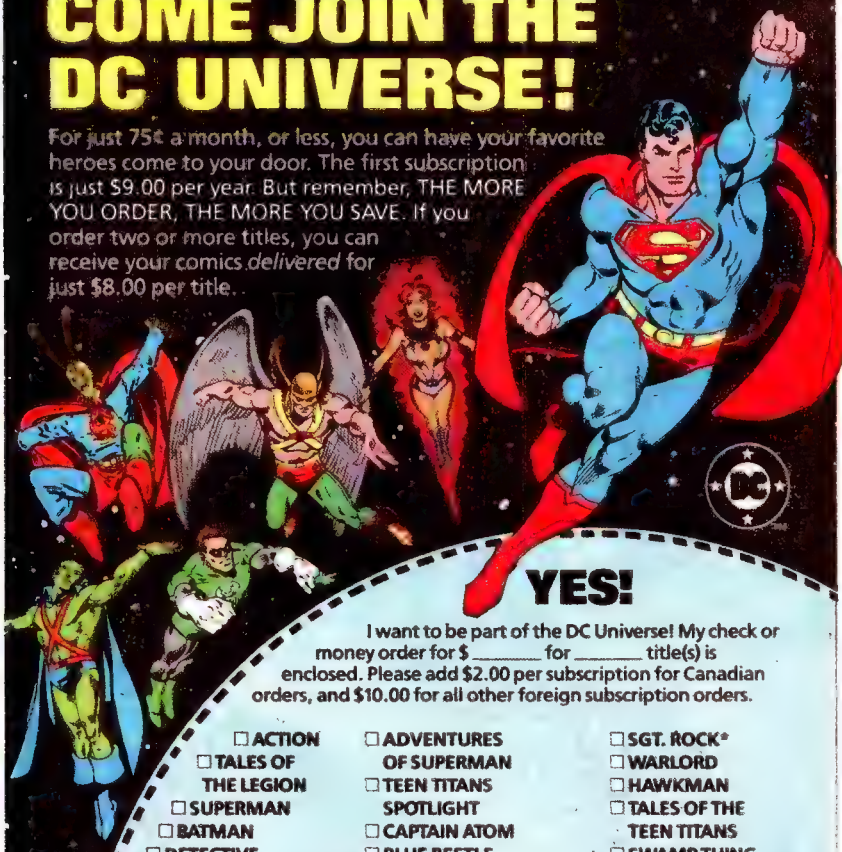

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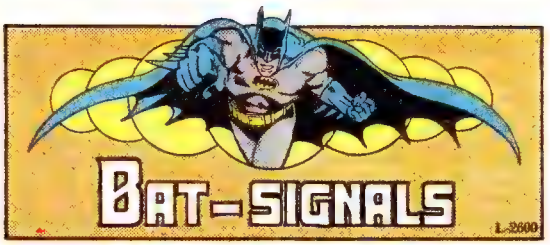
KBLAMM
KBLAMM
--SAVED THAT OLD WOMAN... HE...
They think--I attacked those cops--opening up--
--catch a bullet in my leg--
--ignore it--
Blind alley--no way out--
--except that window--
--only chance--
--buy me a moment--
NO ONE FIRES WITHOUT MY ORDER--
--GET THE FRONT OF THAT PLACE COVERED--
--MERKEL--TAKE A SQUAD TO THE ROOF--
LIEUTENANT--IT'S THE COMMISSIONER--
--the roof--if I can reach it before they do--
--before they get air support!--
--COMMISSIONER, THERE'S NO NEED FOR--
--BATMAN HASN'T ATTACKED ANYBODY--
--COMMISSIONER--YOU CAN'T LET BRANDEN--

WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP
NO. OH, NO.
The Commissioner didn't want to miss this chance.
Said he checked the building.
Called in his friend Brandon.
Said it's due for demolition.
Said nobody would be hurt--
--nobody-- except a derelict or two--
--and Batman...
TO BE CONTINUED



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Dear Bat-People,

Really liked the Collins/Starlin story in **BATMAN** #402, but that's a minor point this time out. DC is doing some really great stuff with Bats this year, so good stories are no surprise. My concern for this letter is on a minor detail that's starting to get on my nerves. What's the detail?

Batman's ribs! Everybody and their mother is writing stories where Batman gets his ribs busted in, so much so it's getting to be like the "flesh wound" of the old cowboy movies. The man's ribs are going to be powder pretty soon, or worse yet, what if he punctures a lung? Let the man get shot, gassed, knocked out, but leave Batman's ribs alone for a while!

Please?

Brad Keefauver
207 Rassi Ave.
Morton, IL 61550

*Actually, I thought the idea—if you were Batman, that is—was **NOT** to get shot, gassed, knocked out or kicked in the ribs ... But you're right, Batman's ribs have taken quite a beating lately. We'll try to damage some other part of his anatomy next time. Quick, Watson, hand me the wrench!*

*****

Dear Denny,

I for one applaud your changing the Batman back to the grim, dark avenger that he was in the comics of the late 1930s. This is the Batman that I've always wanted and got in the DARK KNIGHT and now in the pages of BATMAN and DETECTIVE comics.

Now for some continuity comments. To begin with, the Batman's appearance in MAN OF STEEL occurred about 1979, and it seemed that he, like Superman, had just begun his crime-fighting career. This would make Dick Grayson 19 years old, if he started in 1980 at the age of 13. This works well, but I am asking to insure that such perfect continuity continues aging the characters realistically. (I'm not asking for silly annual "birthday" issues, however). This lack of aging on the part of Superman, the Batman and Wonder Woman is what started all this multiverse mess to begin with!

Secondly, I can't envision this Batman joining the JLA or forming the Outsiders. (Not that I want to get rid of the Outsiders; just drop the Batman from their origin and get him out of the JLA!) What does he do: drive to Metropolis or Detroit on the weekends for JLA meetings?

Will Batgirl (or is it "The Batgirl") be returning? Does she still exist? *(Yes—see SECRET ORIGINS #16—BJR)* (Just because she survived CRISIS doesn't mean she still exists in this "New Earth".) How about Man-Bat? *(Maybe.)* Will Dick Grayson guest-star? *(Possibly.)*

I really like this "Mazzucchelli-look" Batman, from his wrinkled boots through his bulky utility belt and up to his slightly curved "ears". Will this uniform stick around? Will he retain the bat on his chest without the yellow oval?

Overall, DC is making wonderful changes since the Crisis. Superman, the GL Corps, and others are or will be better than ever! Just one thing: despite what has been written in CRISIS and LEGENDS, the super-heroes shouldn't remember the Crisis, because it only existed in the multiverse. Now, with only one universe, a Crisis could (and did) never happen. Besides, I'd hate to have the Batman referring to events that never happened—it cheapens the plot.

Ever the Bat-fan—

John LeMaitre
237 S. Filimore
Edwardsville, IL 62025

Everybody in the DC universe does remember a time of storms and death, referred to as the Crisis. What they don't remember is the presence of heroes eliminated by the revision of the universe. There were quite a few deaths and horrors for them all without the inclusion of the off-world events from CRISIS.

*****

Dear Denny,

I have always enjoyed the scripting of Max Collins' beautifully written *Ms. Tree* detective stories and his *Mike Mist* mysteries. I always wanted to see him write for BATMAN, the world's greatest detective! Max delivered a gritty and fast-moving tale that, although not the most original Batman setting, was very enjoyable. All I can ask is that maybe, sometime in the next year, BATMAN can find some time in his very busy schedule to make a date, and better yet a crossover, with Max's glamorous MICHAEL TREE!

I'm also a fan of Jim Starlin and his comic contributions. Unfortunately, I found his art in BATMAN #402 to be ... still at best. I noticed that he fell into a trap that many other artists who draw Robin/Jason Todd have fallen into as well. While DICK GRAYSON's hair is parted on the side, JASON's is parted in the middle. Although I think it looks better parted on the side, I feel this is something that should remain consistent. So for the record, is Jason's hair parted on the side or in the middle?

Here's to the hopeful return of these two creative geniuses!

Chris Romano
16907 Avenida de Santa Ynez
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

Jason's hair is parted at the roots. (Sorry—hate to part with a clipped comment like that...)

*****

And then there's the guys who are never satisfied. Ah, the follicle of youth...

Hey, Denny—

Why did you run such a horrid Collins/Starlin story in BATMAN #402?

I mean, while both of these gentlemen have proven their talents many times over the course of their careers, they failed to prove it this time out.

The story was one of the weakest efforts from Max Collins that I've ever read, and Jim Starlin's artwork was laughable, especially the elongated ears on the cowl. Tommy looked more like Bugs Bunny (pg. 23, panel 2) than a dangerous menace.

In short, if I want a weak artistic effort that's attached to a predictable story, I'll buy lots of Marvel comics. Seeya next month.

Elvis Orten
Route #4, Box 120
Dawson Springs, KY 42408

NEXT ISSUE: BATMAN VS. THE ROADRUNNER! BUGS VS. BEEP! (With special appearances by Daffy Denny and Babs as the Chipmunk!) Just kidding.

*****

Dear DC Comics Inc.,

I can't wait for BATMAN: YEAR ONE because:

I'M A COLLECTOR*

Comic books had always seemed like "kiddie stuff",
Meant for someone at the age of three;
The stories were so silly, with no reality...
Far removed from all that they could be.

But then I saw DARK KNIGHT!
Now I'm a collector!
And Batman's fight
Has pulled me right in!
I'm in love...
I'm a collector,
I couldn't reject it

If I tried!

Comic books had always seemed "the same old thing";

If the art was good, they lacked a plot.

What's the use in buying, when it's all the same?

But then Frank Miller played, and changed the game!

That's when I read DARK KNIGHT!

Now I'm a collector!

And DC's right

On top with this one!

I'm in love...

I'm a collector

I couldn't deflect it

If I tried...

* To the tune of "I'm a Believer" by Neil Diamond, as performed by the Monkees.

Janet L. Hetherington
420 Gloucester St. Apt. 403
Ottawa, Ontario
CANADA K1R 7T7

Yeah! Written on Batman stationery, no less! The next letter came in too late for last month's lettercol, and since I was admonished for picking out all the negative letters on BATMAN #401 to run in that lettercol, (I overcompensated for being personally involved...), here's a late comment on that issue:

*****

To the Editor:

I am sending a letter to you guys at last, after twenty years of privately going wild over Batman comic books, because something to publicly go wild over just happened. There have been dashing, original female characters in BATMAN since its first issue—usually villains—but never before has a BATMAN story been written by a female. It took 401 issues to get to that; but "A Bird in the Hand" was worth the wait. Great *title*, even.

I have read a lot of articles and engaged in much debate recently over women's place in comics (as writers, artists, villains, or whatever), and have come away from the subject with mixed emotions of boredom and disgust. The comics that are aimed at the female market put me to sleep, and nobody seems to feel that women have any business writing or drawing the super-heroes—unless the super-hero is also a woman. Until Barbara J. Randall popped up out of ... well, where *did* she come from? ... with her story, there seemed to be no place on this scene for a female fanboy.

The girly comics make my skin crawl, always have, because they are celebrations of the mediocre. Everybody has to be just like you and me—just like you, maybe; not like me! Any flamboyant, talented or headstrong character in a girly comic is bound to be the antagonist who gets taught a lesson. That kind of indoctrination is sicker than the goriest fight scene could ever be.

Comic readers who fancy themselves enlightened and mature are whining loudly about the super-hero genre, using all the arguments that Ms. Randall gives to G. Gordon Godfrey in her story, but no other genre has ever sold millions of comics, and there's a good reason for that. Comic books present a mythology. A comic book that doesn't knock its readers flat with a vision of glory is just so much designer toilet paper—it isn't worth a damn.

Women's real achievements in the comics industry will come when they take control of the great heroes, like Batman, and write or draw memorable stories that influence the fans—including the next generation of writers and artists.

That is not to say women wouldn't bring an odd angle or two into the genre. Odd angles are what the genre needs; mythology thrives on fresh interpretations of ageless material. If the same bunch of guys keep at it too long, the conventions petrify into fossils and the party moves elsewhere.

There is one scene in BATMAN #401 that no male writer, not even Alan Moore, has approached: the scene in which Robin accidentally pulls off the top of Magpie's costume and is so embarrassed that he lets her get away. For years I have wondered how female characters managed to either prevent or commit crimes in stiletto heels and deep decolletage; it isn't the sexism implicit in such outfits that bothers me, it's the stupidity. Only a bozo would run through the city at 3 AM dressed like that! Robin's confusion is authentic and hilarious.

There's also a lot of gender-free good stuff in this story, and I feel a sort of proprietary pride in it, almost as if I'd written it myself. Frankly, I never would have thought you'd allow a woman such a prominent BATMAN feature—first LEGENDS Crossover and all that—but you've done it now, haven't you?

Congratulations to Barbara J. Randall, and to everyone else involved.

Page Davis
Townhouse Apt. 13-L
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Thanks. As for the story of where I came from, it was the sister lettercol to this one, in DETECTIVE comics. Some guy named Giordano asked for suggestions on how DC's female characters could be improved, and boy did I have stuff to say about that ... It only took me six letters to end up on this side of the col (to simplify the last five years a great deal...), so if you all get started now ... maybe **I'll** *be editing* **your** *scripts someday. Until then, why not write us a letter on this issue? See you next month. (That's BAT-MAIL, c/o DC COMICS, INC., 666 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10103)*

—Barbara

FROM THE DEN

For months, I had been looking for a creative team to assume the ***Batman*** chores after Frank Miller and David Mazzucchelli finish ***Year One***. A lot of names were mentioned—virtually every name that belongs to an established professional or the kind of newcomer who might be able to provide the kind of brooding, moody storytelling that characterizes the classic ***Batman***.

The writer I was seeking had to be a competent plotter—plots are as much a part of the Batman mythos as mood and character—and it would help if he had a feel for the grotesque, the eerie, the odd. A sense of justice would help. And I certainly wouldn't mind if he had a knowledge of comics history in general and Batman history in particular. Reliability would be a nice trait for him to have. And he had, absolutely had, to have an ability to write obsessed heroes.

Right under my nose. The proofs to Batman #403. Right next to that, my Rolodex with a fresh entry under the C card: Max Allan Collins.

Just a couple of issues back, I used part of this space to tell you about Max's accomplishments as the scripter of the Dick Tracy comic strip for the past nine years; the writer and co-creator of ***Ms Tree***, a comic book published by Eclipse; and as the award-winning mystery novelist. (***The Million Dollar Wound*** is the latest Collins I've read, and I recommend it.) So I won't go over all that again. For those of you who came in late, I will mention that Max did two issues for us; I liked them and, judging from the mail, you did, too. There was only one logical question left to be answered: would Max care to write Batman regularly?

The Rolodex was right there.

Five minutes later, I had my answer. Although nobody thought of the stories in Batman #402 and #403 as auditions at the time, that's what they turned out to be. I was pleased with Max and, as he told me on the phone, he was delighted with Batman.

I had my writer.

I still lacked an artist.

Again, the parade of names, of possibilities—an exercise in frustration. Of course, there was that one guy, the one I'd worked with at the Great Big Company ... He did great cityscapes—wonderfully dark, film-noir-ishly stuff—and a fine caped hero. That hero was called Moon Knight, and despite what some fans were saying, he was not really much like our Caped Crusader, but the work, and the artist's very obvious intelligence, indicated he had the raw equipment to do a very good Batman—maybe *better* than very good. But the grapevine had it that he was committed to other projects through the middle of next year sometime. Still, what the hey, it was worth a phone call.

Actually, it took several calls. My man had moved. I finally reached him in Oregon, where he'd gone to escape the horrors of northeastern summer. (I mentioned that he's intelligent?) He *did* have commitments—the good ones always do—but he'd learn if they were negotiable and, more important, he'd commune with his soul to find out if he really wanted to take on something as demanding as Batman. He'd let me know.

The answer, when it finally came, was yes.

His name is Chris Warner and it is not the best known name in comics. At least not yet. But give it a year.

Max and Chris have already had several long conversations. Each has told me how excited he is to be teamed with the other, and together they've hatched some plans that have *me* excited.

I'll tell you about them next issue.

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